

# Utah natural gas rates cut by nearly 9 percent

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Beginning today, Utahns can hold on to a few extra dollars when paying their monthly natural gas bill.

On Wednesday, the Utah Public Service Commission approved an \$84 million decrease in natural gas rates within the state. Residents can expect to save \$64.38 per year from the rate cut, commission spokeswoman Julie Orchard said in a news release.

The state's natural gas customers pay some of the lowest natural gas prices in the lower 48 states, but those prices "remain volatile," and customers are still encouraged to conserve natural gas, she said.

Last month Questar Gas Co. asked the commission for permission to cut natural gas rates by 9 percent. The utility provides most Utahns with fuel required to heat millions of homes, apartments and water heaters.

The commission signed off on the plan Wednesday, approving a slightly smaller 8.92 percent decrease, which will lower rates annually by an estimated \$84 million. The new rates, however, are subject to auditing by the Division of Public Utilities before the rate is finalized, Orchard said.

The rate drop virtually restores gas rates to 2005 levels when hurricanes Katrina and Rita knocked out about 20 percent of the nation's natural gas production in the Gulf Coast. That, in turn, caused a sharp spike in prices.

Those prices have continued to drop, according to Questar, which periodically requests permission from state regulators to realign the money it collects from customers to reflect the actual cost of purchasing the gas.

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